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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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Research Memorandum
RSB-174, October 31, 1962

TO : The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hilsman *Roger Hilsman*
SUBJECT: Indications of Soviet Stalling on the Dismantling of
Cuban Missile Bases

In addition to the ambiguous evidence, produced by surveillance, on the status of the Soviet missile sites in Cuba, there are indications in Moscow, New York and Havana that the Soviets may be seeking to bargain for more favorable terms before actually proceeding with the removal of their missiles. Indications so far do not warrant the conclusion that the Soviets are attempting to Welch on their commitment altogether -- though such a development can never be wholly ruled out.

This paper summarizes evidence of possible Soviet efforts to stall.

State of the Agreement

Although Khrushchev's October 28 letter to the President assumed that an agreement had been reached and appeared intended to freeze the US commitment implied by the President on October 27, subsequent comments by Soviet officials and publicists have been based on the assumption that further negotiations were necessary before the agreement in principle expressed in the exchange of letters could be implemented.

1. When Ambassador Kohler called on Gromyko on October 30, the latter stated that the USSR wished to "codify" an agreement pursuant to the exchange of letters, thereby suggesting that the exchange constituted only an agreement in principle the exact terms of which remained to be negotiated before it could be carried out.

2. Also, on October 30, Moscow Radio broadcast a commentary by Shragin which said, "negotiations on practical questions are only beginning."

3. Soviet propagandists are using themes which could buttress the Soviet public position in event of a breakdown in

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the talks. On October 30, Pravda carried an article which concluded with a warning about the "danger of fresh complications", while Izvestiya ran an item by its New York correspondents accusing the US of evading its responsibilities under the bargain by not terminating the "blockade" permanently.

Broader Assurances for Cuba

Moscow may seek broader assurances for Cuba than a verbal guarantee that the US will not invade that country.

1. Soviet propaganda continues to refer to the danger to Cuba posed by the US threat to the Cuban regime, implying -- though not explicitly stating -- that further commitments from the US would be required before the agreement could be executed.

2. On the other hand Pravda on October 30 indirectly warned Castro against using sabotage in Latin America as a retaliation; the Pravda article called the Venezuelan incident on Sunday a "monstrous provocation" engineered by those who still seek justification for further actions against Cuba.

3. [Gromyko in raising the question of the Cuban negotiations in his talk with Ambassador Kohler, referred to the need to define "Cuban obligations." He thus appeared to be underscoring the importance of Cuba's role in the talks.]

4. Moscow media now refer favorably to Castro's five demands of October 28 (1. end of economic sanctions, 2. end of subversive activities against the Cuban regime, 3. cessation of attacks upon Cuban bound shipping, 4. cessation of violations of Cuban airspace and territorial waters, and 5. withdrawal of the US from Guantanamo) though they refrain from setting these demands as a precondition for agreement.

5. Castro's statement (and apparently direct Cuban demarches to the Soviets) puts the Soviet Union under considerable pressure to improve Cuba's lot in the contemplated agreement. Moscow would not wish to be in the position of negotiating a bilateral agreement with the US which Cuba publicly brands as a betrayal of her interests.

6. In addition, the Soviet Union is already becoming a target for indirect public attacks on the part of Communist China. Moscow has been trying to depict its evident retreat as having forestalled US invasion of Cuba and prevented a possible nuclear war. But unless the Soviet Union can secure Cuba's acquiescence, its case in the eyes of the communist bloc and the international communist movement will be shaken.

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Inspection Procedures

The subject on which the Soviets are most obviously bargaining is the question of establishing effective surveillance over the Soviet Union's withdrawal of its missiles.

1. In conversations, October 29 and 30, Kuznetsov has indicated that there would be no verification of the sites until after dismantling had been completed. On October 29, he indicated this process of dismantling would take one week; the next day he spoke of two to three weeks. In the meantime he expressed concern that the Cubans would object to US or UN overflights for the purpose of aerial reconnaissance. U Thant encountered Cuban opposition to foreign inspection in his first round of talks in Havana.

2. Other potential difficulties in arranging verification procedures are suggested by the October 27 Khrushchev letter to the President to which Kuznetsov referred in his conversations in New York, i.e., a veto over naming the inspectors, absence of provision for verification of other areas than the declared missile sites, and the absence of any Soviet provision for continuing control over reinstallation of missiles.

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Turkish Bases

The Soviet Union has not renewed the demand contained in the October 27 letter to the President that the US dismantle the missile bases in Turkey in exchange for the Soviet bases in Cuba. However, Soviet diplomats and propagandists have kept the Turkish-base issue alive, and the Soviet Union may raise the question once again in the course of talks.

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1. [Kuznetsov has mentioned the US bases in his New York conversations, though without seeking to make their abolition a condition for an agreement.]

2. Soviet propaganda continues to refer to US withdrawal of missiles from Turkey as a desirable response to the Soviet initiative in withdrawing from Cuba, but does not state it as a topic for the present round of negotiations.

Conclusions

1. Moscow apparently feels that the immediate threat of further US military action against Cuba has receded and that it now has some freedom to haggle for better terms before carrying out its end of the bargain.

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2. From the Soviet point of view it is no doubt more prudent to obtain whatever concessions are available before the missiles are removed, than to bank on potential and as yet uncertain compensations later.

3. We cannot exclude the possibility that, having obtained a respite, Moscow may hope to prolong the bargaining and bar US action for a protracted period during which it may somehow hope to freeze the status quo while its missiles remain in Cuba indefinitely.

4. We think it more likely, however, that, for the moment at least, (a) Moscow is simply trying to probe just how much more it can get in return for removing the missiles, (b) Moscow is extremely concerned to obscure the impression of a Soviet backdown and betrayal of Castro, and (c) it wishes the inspection arrangement that is instituted in this case to be so circumspect as not to constitute an undesirable precedent.